

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Montrose School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2003-2004**

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Dates of On Site Visit: February 23rd and 24th, 2004

Date of Report: March 6, 2004

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Parent surveys
- Cornbelt Educational Cooperative forms
- Referrals

- Publication of child find notices
- Cornbelt Educational Cooperative Comprehensive plan
- Yearly child find results

Meets requirements

The steering committee stated policies and procedures and comprehensive plan are referenced regarding placement and services of students enrolled by parents in private schools. Enrollment information and child count data indicates there are no students enrolled in private schools and no private schools reside in the district. The district utilizes the Cornbelt Cooperative comprehensive plan, local and state policies and regulations to guide staff development and staff needs to fulfill this requirement.

The steering committee noted the district uses relevant school data to analyze and review progress toward the state performance goals and objectives.

The steering committee reported the district follows and adheres to the state guidelines for reporting of students suspended, expelled, or dropped out as per the reports required by the state regulations.

The steering committee noted Table B of the school district state report indicates the school district employs and contracts with personnel who are fully licensed or certified to work with children with disabilities. The district adheres to district policies and procedures for the appropriate supervision of these individuals.

Needs improvement

The steering committee stated the school district has identified systems for receiving documented referrals. Policies and procedures are in place, which addresses the referral issue. Written documentation of referrals are not consistently located in the student files. Staff surveys noted a concern in regard to the pre-referral and referral systems.

Validation Results

Promising practice

Critical Reading is a class available for all students from 7th through 11th grade for an extra semester of reading. The purpose is to enhance reading skills and develop better thinkers. The information presented in the class includes a wide variety of reading from literatures books, novels, classroom edition of the Wall Street Journal, Teen Newsweek and the Argus Leader. The students read and analyze technical writing, classified ads and labels and design business e-mails. Students are asked to do reading response in a critical manner on random topics. The students' job is to determine: What is the question?

Poetry is another avenue pursued in the class. The teacher models by reading aloud. Students are required to find a poem and compare it with another piece of poetry. Legos and Tinker Toys are used to build things and the students are then responsible for writing the directions for the project. They are also asked to design a challenging game and write the step-by-step directions for playing the game.

Speakers are invited to the classroom. One person brought in a test he had to take to be a potential employee of a company where he had applied for a job. The class spends time asking questions and analyzing all aspects of the test.

OST: Out of School Time.

This is a program that provides care for all students before and after school. It begins at 6:45-8:00 AM and from 3:30-6:00 PM. A grant funds this program and the director is employed by the school district and paid from the grant. The program operates in the summer, on snow days and in-service days. The summer hours are 6:45 AM until 6:00 PM. The first half hour Monday through Thursday is quiet time and

spent on homework. Montrose is one of fourteen accredited sites in the state. Three high school students volunteer time every day, people in the community donate snacks and a parent board helps make decisions.

CONFLICT CREW:

Conflict Crew is in its fourth year. A group of second through sixth grade students is trained as peer mediators. Officers and representatives are chosen and monthly meetings are held. The responsibility of the mediators is to monitor the playground and gym areas. The students are trained to mediate; classroom teachers are not involved unless violence is reported. Each year a theme is chosen such as “Bullying” or “Don’t Laugh at Me.”

Once a month the students have a payday, where they get treats for doing their job. The research shows that mediating student’s problems makes them better friends. This program was funded by a grant, and is overseen by the second grade teacher.

READING RALLY:

The third Monday of each month a reading rally takes place in the school. At 6:30 PM students come to the school, and bring someone with them to read to, or be read to. At the end of forty minutes there is a talent show for each grade. The time limit for each group is 10 minutes. Some activities are Readers Theatre, and poetry developed by the class. A drawing is held for books and refreshments are provided by community members. An average of 90 attend the reading rally each month. Reading Rally is open to all families in the district and is a method for developing parent support.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data for Principle One, General Supervision as meeting the requirements.

Needs improvement

Through file reviews and staff interviews the monitoring team agree the area of referral is an area needing improvement.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State Tables B, C, E, F, K, L, M, N
- Number of students screened
- Preschool age
- School age
- Budget information
- Surveys

- Comprehensive plans
- Personnel training
- Number of referrals not resulting in evaluation

Meets requirements

The steering committee reported current practices and past reviews from the state and federal special education monitoring demonstrate the district provides a free appropriate public education for all children with disabilities. All information is available to the monitoring team to review for assurances.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data for Principle Two, Free Appropriate Public Education, as meeting the requirements.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State tables G, H, I, J,
- Teacher file reviews
- Comprehensive plan
- TAT information
- Initial referral
- Parent and teacher report forms
- Parent form for information

Meets requirements

The steering committee reported files reviews indicate the district completes valid and reliable evaluations. The district has policies and procedures aligned with state and federal regulations in this area. The steering committee reports the district follows the state eligibility requirements to ensure appropriate evaluation.

Needs improvement

The steering committee stated file reviews reflected 62% of parents had input into the evaluation process, however, prior notice sheets document parental input. 54% of files reflected a completed functional assessment as part of evaluation process.

Parental consent was obtained in twelve of thirteen files. Policies and procedures pertaining to written notice and informed parental consent are in place and follow both federal and state regulations and procedures.

Twelve of thirteen files met the requirements for evaluation and reevaluation. The school district follows the state administrative rules pertaining to evaluation and reevaluation procedures. Concerns pertaining to reevaluation were noted in three of thirteen files.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with areas identified as meeting the requirements for appropriate evaluation as concluded by the steering committee with the exception the issues identified under “Out of Compliance”.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as needing improvement with the exception of the issues identified under “Out of Compliance”.

In five of fourteen student files reviewed by the monitoring team, the psychological evaluation report indicated the Human Figure Drawing was administered during the evaluation; however, the report did not include results of this evaluation. The district needs to improve its’ method reporting accurate information to the parents. Also, when a young child is given a developmental evaluation, the information given to parents on the prior notice/consent does not reflect the area(s) of development to be evaluated (i.e. cognitive, physical, communication, social/emotional and adaptive functioning skills). A statement of the developmental areas to be evaluated on the prior notice/consent would provide parents a clearer understanding of the action being proposed.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:25:02 Determination of needed evaluation data

As part of an initial or reevaluation, the individual education program team and other individuals with knowledge and skills necessary to interpret evaluation data, determine what evaluation data is needed to support eligibility and the child’s special education needs.

In all student files reviewed, with the exception of speech/language and early childhood, the monitoring team found that students were given a Behavior Assessment for Children. Interviews with special education teachers indicated the Cornbelt cooperative has told them that behavior assessment must be completed on all students suspected of a disability in which a psychological evaluation is requested. Based on this information, the monitoring team concluded the district does not consider the child’s individual needs when making the determination of needed evaluation data.

The school district shall administer tests and any other evaluation materials as may be needed to produce the data required to make the determination (a) whether the student has a particular category of disability, (b) the present levels of performance and educational needs of the student; and (c) whether the student needs special education and related services. If no additional data are needed to make the determination, the school district shall notify the student’s parents of this fact and the reasons for this decision. In February, 2002, the evaluation team determined no evaluations were needed for a three year reevaluation for a student listed on the child count as mentally retarded. Prior notice was not available in the student file. However, the first statement in the present level of performance was “_____ seems to be regressing rather than progressing. We are not sure, why, but we are very concerned about this”. No functional information was reported in the student file.

The district reported a five year old on the child count in the area of speech language with occupational therapy as a related service. The evaluation completed, in the spring of 2002, stated the cognitive portion of the Battelle was administered with each subtest showing standard scores ranging from 65 to 72. The total cognitive score was 65, which is -2.33 standard deviations below the mean. No cognitive goals

were included on the student's IEP. Speech language tests and fine motor evaluations were also administered. No adaptive behavior measure was administered. The student was placed on an IEP for speech language and occupational therapy as a related service. The occupational therapy goal was a fine motor goal rather than an oral motor goal, which relates to the speech mechanism. Shortly after school started in the fall of 2003, the kindergarten teacher made a referral for a comprehensive evaluation for the student. On December 10, 2003, the placement committee met and determined the child met the requirements for a specific learning disability. The district again did not include adaptive behavior in the evaluation for this student. Administrative rule requires an adaptive behavior measure be administered for a student suspected of having a cognitive disability (mental retardation).

ARSD 24:05:24:04 Evaluation procedures

The evaluation team must consider a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child, including information provided by the parents.

Through the review of twelve student records, the monitoring team found the district staff did not complete functional assessment during the 25-day evaluation timelines, and no report was available in the student file. During interviews, special education staff reported a lack of understanding concerning gathering and reporting functional assessment. The monitoring team noted a written summary of functional information was not consistently included in the evaluation report or in the present levels of performance. As a result the students' present levels of performance, annual goals and short-term instructional objectives did not link to evaluation.

ARSD 24:05:25:07 Additional procedures for evaluating specific learning disabilities.

ARSD 24:05:25:08 Additional team members for specific learning disabilities.

ARSD 24:05:25:09 Criteria for determining the existence of a specific learning disability.

ARSD 24:05:25:10 Prohibitions concerning identification of specific learning disabilities.

ARSD 24:05:25:11 Observation for specific learning disabilities.

ARSD 24:05:25:12 Written report for specific learning disabilities.

ARSD 24:05:25:13 Team members to certify report in writing.

In order for a school district to certify a child as a learning disabled for purposes of the federal child count, requirements 24:05:24:01:19 and 24:05:25:08 to 24:05:25:13, inclusive, must be met and documented in a child's record. In two student files, no parent signature was included on the multidisciplinary team report, two student files did not address relevant behaviors, in three files only the psychologist signed the report and in five files there was no report of a completed observation.

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Transition services

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to postschool activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development employment and other postschool adult living objectives, and if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

Through review of eight student files and staff interviews, the monitoring team noted transition evaluations were not administered prior to age 16 to assist in developing transition services and activities.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State Table L and M
- Surveys
- Public awareness information
- FERPA disclosure
- Teacher files reviews
- Comprehensive plan
- Consent and prior notice forms

Meets requirements

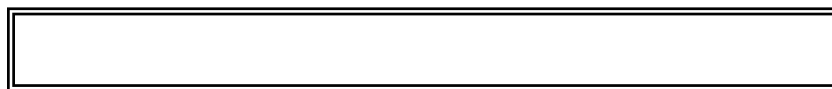
The steering committee noted the district ensures notification to parents regarding their rights. The district has training, policies and procedures for surrogate parents and to ensure parents fully understand why consent is sought.

The steering committee reports the district provides opportunity for parents to inspect and review all educational records. The district has policies and procedures pertaining to complaint issues and due process.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for procedural safeguards as noted by the steering committee.



The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Student progress data
- File reviews
- Personnel training
- State data tables K and N
- Budget Information

Meets Requirements

The steering committee reports the district IEP form contains the required content. Progress reports are provided according to the IEP. All files include measurable annual goals and modifications and accommodations.

Needs improvement

The steering committee reports the appropriate membership at IEP meetings. Written notices contain the required content. IEP's were reviewed on or before the annual review date. Refer to areas under "out of compliance."

Out of compliance

Transition information for students age 14 and up, is included in a small percentage of student files.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting the requirements for appropriate evaluation as concluded by the steering committee, with the exception of the issues identified under "Out of Compliance".

Needs improvement

Through student file reviews and staff interviews, the monitoring team agrees appropriate membership at IEP meeting, information in written prior notice and annual review dates are areas identified as needing improvement.

Out of compliance

The monitoring team agrees transition information for students age 14 and up is not consistently part of the student file. Transition assessment was not completed and therefore did not drive the development of life planning outcomes, course of study and transition services. Transition services were typically a statement of what is happening now rather than statements pertaining to the student's future. Course of study was most often a list of required courses rather than course work that would pertain to a living goal or employment goal.

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the skill areas affected by the student's identified disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. In fifteen student files reviewed by the monitoring team, present levels of performance were not linked to functional evaluation and did not contain skill-based strengths, needs or how the disability affects the child's involvement and progress in the general curriculum.



After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State tables E, G, I, J, F, and N
- Surveys
- File reviews

Needs improvement

The steering committee stated the district has policies and procedures in place for addressing the least restrictive environment. Behavioral intervention plans have been written for students who require them. Inclusionary practices for preschool need to be expanded to meet the children's needs.

Validation Results

Needs improvement

Through student file reviews and staff interviews, the monitoring team agrees areas identified need to improve. Through interviews, staff indicated their desire to expand options for preschool age children. Upon review of child count information, the team found, in the majority of cases students were placed in a segregated special education placements.